



CITY OF NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS Solid Waste Reduction and Management Task Force

Solid Waste Management and Reduction Task Force Meeting Minutes

Monday December 6, 2010

Committee Members Present: (All Present) Mark Carmien, Citizen; Terry Culhane, Board of Public Works; Wendy Foxmyn, Citizen and Task Force Chair; Marianne LaBarge, Ward 6 Councilor; David Narkewicz, City Council President; Mimi Odgers, Citizen, Water Not Waste; Donna Salloom, Board of Health; Rosemary Schmidt, Board of Public Works; David Starr, Citizen, GREEN Northampton

Staff Present: Edward Huntley, Director of Public Works; Karen Bouquillon, Solid Waste Supervisor; David Veleta, Assistant Environmental Engineer; Arlene Miller, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Municipal Assistance Coordinator

Others Present: Michael Bardsley, Colleen Currie, David Shearer, Joanne Bisette, Nancy Duseau, Armand ("Bud") Duseau, and Richard Carnall of Duseau Trucking; Craig Odgers ("filmed" meeting for internet posting)

(Prior to the start of the meeting each Task Force member was provided with five handouts, all of which are posted on the [Solid Waste Reduction & Management Task Force](http://www.northamptonma.gov/solidwaste)'s website at <http://www.northamptonma.gov/solidwaste>).

Review/Acceptance of 11/15/10 Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. The Task Force members identified themselves. The agenda was reviewed and no modifications were made. The minutes from the November 15, 2010 meeting of the Task Force were reviewed, and unanimously approved without discussion (motion to accept by Terry Culhane, second by Marianne LaBarge).

Meeting Process/Public Comment Guidelines

Wendy Foxmyn led the discussion about group decision-making by reviewing a handout entitled "SW Task Force Decision-Making Model and Ground Rules". There were no comments from the Task Force members, and the proposed model and fundamental rules were accepted by the group. W. Foxmyn then led a discussion with another handout entitled "Public Participation at Solid Waste Reduction and Management Task Force Meetings". W. Foxmyn pointed out that public comment would occur at the beginning of each meeting, as well as offering other opportunities to contribute during the meeting. D. Narkewicz said that public participation at the beginning of City Council meetings works well. W. Foxmyn concluded the discussion about the two handouts with a request for Task Force members to assist with implementation of the guidelines and ground rules.

W. Foxmyn had a request from a resident who wanted to be included in the Task Force's email list, and asked for suggestions. T. Culhane said that the DPW has had success with their blog, which receives responses to postings. He also said that a Google group could be used to keep the public informed. Mimi Odgers asked for clarification regarding what needs would be addressed: to allow the public to receive updates about the work of the Task Force or to provide them with an opportunity to provide input. There was general consensus that any vehicle used for

communication should allow for both. David Starr offered to set up a Google group, and Karen Bouquillon agreed to set up a site for the Task Force on the City's website.

The next item on the agenda was to brainstorm and establish goals; W. Foxmyn asked if it made more sense to take up the discussion of basic solid waste options first, and everyone agreed.

Discussion of Basic Solid Waste Options

Arlene Miller began her presentation by referring to two handouts, which she said were very similar in content. One was a memo from her to the Task Force dated November 30, 2010, and the other was entitled "Northampton Post-Landfill Examples of Solid Waste Collection Alternatives", which had been prepared by DPW staff. A. Miller said that she found the Solid Waste Management Alternatives Study fascinating and well prepared, and encouraged the Task Force members to spend time to review it thoroughly. To frame the conversation, A. Miller said that there were basically only three waste collection options: curbside, drop-off and "washed hands", but in the real world they tend to exist as hybrid systems. She explained that in drop-off communities, there will always be some percentage of the population that will contract with private haulers for curbside collection and that that a single-hauler curbside contract could include trash, recycling and anything else that the municipality wanted to include (.e.g., electronics, bulky waste, yard and leaf waste, etc.), and the contract could include disposal costs or not. In "washed hands" communities, A. Miller said that residents are on their own to obtain services from [up to] six different haulers on a weekly, every-other week or monthly basis. She said that there is no law that says a municipality has to provide waste management services, yet "washed hands" communities are extremely rare. She pointed out that in the hierarchy of what these systems cost, drop-off is the cheapest system, curbside represents the middle ground, and "washed hands" is the most expensive for residents. T. Culhane stated that the Landfill Alternatives study demonstrated that there would be a 40-50% reduction in costs to residents if the City went to a single hauler system, and A. Miller confirmed this, adding that the savings could be even higher.

A. Miller said most communities have hybrid models. For example, many curbside communities have drop-off centers for electronics and difficult to manage wastes. She said choices have to be made about these kinds of materials, because if they are not managed they will end up in the Meadows. She said that it isn't necessary to be redundant for materials picked up at the curb (e.g., trash and recycling collected curbside as well as at a drop-off facility).

W. Foxmyn asked T. Culhane to explain why a scenario in which the Northampton DPW would provide curbside collection services was not presented as an option. T. Culhane explained that it was much more efficient to work with private haulers, versus purchasing specialized collection equipment- not to mention many other costs associated with a start-up operation.

D. Narkewicz asked about the Town of Amherst, which has private haulers using a unit-based pricing system based on the number of barrels set out for collection. A. Miller said that the Town also operates a drop-off center which does not cover its own costs. K. Bouquillon explained that Amherst used to have curbside contracts with two different haulers using a franchise model, but the Town had allowed the contracts to expire. A. Miller stated the more hauling companies that operate in a community, the higher the costs for residents due to inefficiencies, including multiple trucks traveling the same routes to serve discontinuous customers. These types of inefficiencies offset the competitive advantages that might otherwise be realized within a free market. T. Culhane added that Amherst also has a residential drop-off facility that operates at a loss.

A. Miller discussed how costs are paid in different communities. She said it is becoming increasingly rare for waste management services to be paid 100% through property taxes, and that any time a municipality charges a fee, residents will have an opportunity to “opt out”. A. Miller said that tax-based funding is morphing towards user fees. She provided several examples:

- Springfield has a \$93/year flat fee per household.
- Longmeadow and East Longmeadow have a modified Pay-As –You-Throw (PAYT) system, in which the first 33-gallon barrel or bag of trash (per week per household) is covered through taxes and excess trash must be placed in “overflow” PAYT bags that can be purchased through local retailers. Longmeadow also has a drop-off facility with a very popular swap shop.
- South Hadley assesses a fixed fee on a per-capita basis to cover collection costs, and currently offers unlimited trash collection. Starting next July, the Town will replace this with a PAYT bag system to cover variable (disposal) costs.

D. Narkewicz stated that the Mayor has stipulated that the Task Force’s recommendations must be financially self-sustaining through the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund, and not through the city's General Fund.

Donna Salloom asked A. Miller to discuss the “washed hands” approach from a health perspective, including nuisance issues and illegal dumping. A. Miller stated that there will be bad apples in any community, regardless of what services are (or are not) provided. W. Foxmyn asked if illegal dumping increases when communities switch from one system to another (e.g., Greenfield drop-off to PAYT). A. Miller said no; if a community had illegal dumping before (as they all do), it will continue to happen after the change. She said getting the police involved and publicizing their enforcement efforts is an effective deterrent.

D. Starr asked how must we enforce recycling? A. Miller said that with a single hauler system, the City would have the authority to examine trash after it has been placed at the curb. She emphasized that financial incentives (e.g., PAYT and others) reduces the need for enforcement.

A. Miller discussed the Town of Wilbraham, which has a drop-off center. In the past, residents paid \$50/year for a permit and \$1.25 a bag. Over time, residents shifted towards subscription services, which eventually caused the annual permit fee to increase to \$135 and the bag fee to \$2.25. Several years ago, a proposal to provide curbside solid waste proposal was defeated. She anticipates that the Town will be revisiting the single hauler option at some point in the future.

A. Miller described her involvement with South Hadley’s Solid Waste Master Plan. At the time, the Town was facing closure of their landfill in January 2010 and the loss of benefits associated with the operation (e.g., 4000 tons/year of waste disposal at no cost every year). The Town’s Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) recommended a phased approach, including the adoption of a curbside program using \$1.00 PAYT bags and the elimination of the flat fee in July 2011. The new system will initially be subsidized by landfill revenue, but when the subsidies disappear they will have a system in place that can maximize waste reduction with the ability to cover all costs. The SWAC made it a priority to communicate this message to the public: increased costs and changes are coming...we need to get ready now.

T. Culhane led the discussion about a handout entitled “Northampton Post-Landfill Examples of Solid Waste Collection Alternatives”. He said that Option #1 [“City Transfer Station(s) and Private Subscription Haulers”] represents a status quo minus the landfill operation. In this scenario, private haulers would continue to serve residents, and the rest of the population would use a transfer station operated by the City. He noted that without the landfill’s subsidies it would be unlikely that the City could afford to operate both the Locust Street and Landfill sites, and these sites are not equivalent. Maintaining a residential drop-off facility only at the DPW yard would not be an option. He said that developing the MassHighway site (which is adjacent to the DPW yard) for this purpose might cost upwards of \$1 million.

T. Culhane continued to explain that Option #2 [“Citywide Curbside Collection Only”] would likely result in a 50% savings for residents who currently have subscription services. He pointed out the City is not required to provide drop-off facilities for residents who opt out of the curbside program, and residents could continue to contract with subscription haulers. A. Miller said that Agawam uses this curbside-only approach: everything is picked up at the curb using a single hauler system. W. Foxmyn asked if this option might accommodate multiple haulers. K. Bouquillon said that this could be achieved with a variety of franchise models.

T. Culhane explained that Option #3 [Citywide Curbside with Glendale Transfer Station] would be similar to Option #2, except that residents who “opt out” would have an alternative to the City’s curbside program or hiring a subscription hauler, as well as managing difficult to manage wastes (e.g., mattresses, furniture, electronics, etc.) for all residents.

M. Carmien said that all of the options appeared to be hybrid systems, since residents can always opt out and use subscription services. He is most interested in what will be best for residents- a balance of convenience, cost effectiveness, maximizing waste reduction and other factors that may be impossible to quantify, such as the hands-on communal aspects associated with using a drop-off facility. He said that the “washed hands” approach would be the most costly for residents- and not in the best interest of the City. R. Schmidt agreed that the challenge was to weigh the costs and benefits for a wide range of individuals.

M. LaBarge contributed that everything is picked up at the curb in Texas on a regular schedule. She is concerned about traffic on Glendale Road.

M. Carmien questioned whether the costs in the Landfill Alternatives Study are still accurate. A. Miller and T. Culhane affirmed that they were very close, and any changes in costs between the various options would be proportionate. A. Miller said it is difficult to compare apples to apples in the real world, but she uses a figure of \$400 per household per year for subscription services.

Joanne Bessette asked if solar cells were installed on the landfill, could the revenue offset trash disposal costs and address the conundrum of losing landfill subsidies. Would the revenues go into the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund (SWEF)? She said a feasibility study must be done, using data and costs from waste haulers and proposals from solar companies in order to capture stimulus funding before it’s all gone. R. Schmidt responded that the DPW is not in a position to count on future revenue from alternative energy projects at the landfill. D. Veleta said that the DPW is working with the Picker Engineering Program at Smith College to evaluate the feasibility of solar, wind and biomass at the landfill.

T. Culhane confirmed that any such revenue would go into the SWEF. In response to a comment about landfill closure costs, he said that a financial assurance fund is already in place to cover landfill closure costs and to monitor it for 30+ years.

A. Miller mentioned that Gloucester MA had recently switched from stickers to bags and the results were exceptional. She said their results would be worth looking at.

M. Carmien asked for more details about Northampton's proposed PAYT bag system. T. Culhane said that 3 sizes of trash bags would have been sold through about two dozen retailers in the City. M. LaBarge said that the PAYT bag proposal was defeated in the past because so many people want to be able to continue purchasing trash bags in bulk at Costco's and BJ's. A. Miller stated that "circumstances can change, and people can change".

K. Bouquillon said that it is necessary to reach critical mass of participating households to make curbside systems cost-effective, somewhere in the range of 70%. She mentioned that the trend for curbside programs is automated collection, using wheeled carts with lids.

A. Miller described Sunderland's recent experience, going from a tax-based collection system to private haulers. In general, she said the trend is the opposite direction- going from "washed hands" to one hauler systems. Armand "Bud" Duseau said that Duseau Trucking currently has 60% of the residential business in Sunderland, using 47-, 65-, and 96-gallon carts. All of the company's collections are PAYT.

Richard Carnall of Duseau Trucking said if there were no drop-off facilities, then the least cost option would be eliminated. A. Miller said that everyone's costs will be going up anyway, because the landfill subsidies will end and most of the costs associated with waste management will increase.

M. Carmien said that "washed hands" doesn't necessarily mean that the City will have no waste management costs. He mentioned schools, municipal buildings, and illegal dumping. And there would be no money to support innovative programs, like a swap shop.

D. Veleta said that there are hidden costs associated with drop-off programs, in which each individual is essentially their own hauler. Drop-off is not that inexpensive when time, transportation costs and environmental costs are taken into consideration. A vehicle dedicated to a curbside route is much more efficient than thousands of cars making a trip to the drop-off center once a week.

M. Odgers agreed that there are benefits associated with the single hauler approach, and acknowledged that subscription customers would be paying less and drop-off customers would be paying more. She expressed concern about truck traffic and uncovered loads, because she has been directly impacted by this on Glendale Road.

Brainstorm and Establish Goals

- R. Schmidt: Issues that relate to costs for individuals versus convenience
What is best for the community as a whole, as well as the City's interests
Taking responsibility for our own trash
- D. Salloom: Factors that encourage people to increase recycling and reduce waste

- Equity
- Considering people with special circumstances (e.g., people without cars)
- T. Culhane: Individual responsibility
- Generate and export the least amount of waste possible
- A. Miller: PAYT- the more you generate, the more you pay
- Equity
- D. Narkewicz Design for sustainability within a larger philosophy (Sustainable Northampton)
- Zero waste goals (which may be more expensive)
- Value/cost/benefit analysis
- D. Starr Zero Waste is #1
- Recycling enforcement
- M. Odgers Responsibility on an individual level
- Education

Colleen Currie asked if there will ever be another landfill in Northampton and a brief discussion followed about why alternative sites were not feasible. M. Odgers stated that development of landfills was not a relevant topic for the Task Force to discuss.

For a future meeting, M. Odgers asked for an update about zero waste- what Northampton and other communities are doing.

Task Force members decided to invite waste haulers to the next meeting on Monday, December 20, 2010 at 6:30 in the Smith Vocational School Library. Members were encouraged to send questions for the haulers to K. Bouquillon (kbouquillon@nohodpw.com).

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

(These meeting minutes were prepared by Karen Bouquillon based on hand written notes taken during the meeting and reviewed/edited by Chair Foxmyn. Meeting attendees are asked to review this summary to make sure it is an accurate reflection of meeting discussions. The minutes can be amended per vote of the committee members.)